

NOT FUTURE
(same)

file: future.1. The future, if the Reagan team has its way.
Saturday, March 29, 1986.

Notes for memo, file: future.

Lessons of the past week: Gulf of Sidra, Honduras invasion, Senate vote on contra aid.

Reagan's orchestration (read Reagan team's, with goal set by Reagan and general nature of tactics approved by Reagan: i.e., conspiracy, provocation, secrecy/deception, media manipulation, threats and promises to Congress, threat of McCarthyism: Buchananism (refer back to his Watergate memos!))

--Replay of '50's: Dulles' rhetoric and religious worldview, anti-Sovietism; absence of negotiated agreements; use of "crises"; above all, US superiority (maintained by threats of imminent inferiority, "gaps"); US unilateralism, vigilanteism, unrestrained by world law (World Court!) or UN or world opinion (see Wicker column yesterday: also, on pattern of provocation last week); heavy reliance on CIA covert action: see Judis column in ITT this week on restoration of DDO, reliance on it;

--The resolution before the House two weeks ago was a Tonkin Gulf Resolution, presented in the absence of a Tonkin Gulf incident! But Reagan had lots of warning that he wouldn't win with it, on the first round, in the House. He seemed to want, not to maximise his chances of winning on the first round (he refused compromise, or conciliation) but to identify clearly and stigmatise--as disloyal to his Administration and to the country, to anti-Communism (religion of)--both Dem and Republican opponents, perhaps for two purposes: a) a later victory, essentially on his terms, after victory in the Senate (critical to his game plan); b) use to attack Dems and to purge disloyal Repubs in fall elections.

Before the Senate vote on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, he provided the Tonkin Gulf incidents.

Note that both aims above were aided by reserving the Incidents for the Senate vote. His critics in the House were sandbagged; they can be accused--as he is now accusing them--of having "trusted" Ortega and having been "slapped in the face." I.e., either Ortega appears actually contemptuous of them, in his lack of consideration for their exposure, or else he is so impulsive, uncalculating, or unpredictable that the effect is the same. (They might well be asking themselves, "What little surprise is Ortega preparing for us the day before the April 15 vote, or the day after?")

Gulf of Sidra confrontation: A demonstration of US technology, willingness to spill blood, will and ability to humiliate (?) a Third World minor opponent, act specifically as "world policeman" upholding "freedom of the seas" for everyone,

reminding everyone that we are the #1 naval power, asserting that we recognize obligations by that very fact (Luttwak, on McNeil-Lehrer, Monday or Tuesday).

--What did it take, in fact, to get Khaddafy to attack? He did not attack ships, in the vicinity of the Line of Death. He fired on planes: a) where were they, how far out? b) Where were they heading, what were they doing?

Were they, by any chance, doing the sort of maneuvers that make air defense systems turn on...or even, fire? Were they making "mock attacks"? How far out do planes have to be before such maneuvers are not considered "presumptively threatening," by the Kelso principle (Commander Sixth Fleet), who attacked on this basis patrol boats that were forty miles away, and closing, on the grounds that these were within missile range. What is the range of the aircraft missiles?

What were those planes doing with respect to Libyan radar before the Libyans fired? Could it have been regarded as threatening?

What are Libyan claims with respect to air space, above the Gulf of Sidra? In general, what had Khaddafy said with respect to the Gulf and his claims: that no military ship or plane would be allowed in, or he would fire?

Note that Khaddafy cannot admit--if it is the case--that he was prepared to show restraint toward US incursions of the Gulf of Sidra, if they were not specifically threatening, and that he had to be further provoked into attacking the planes. Thus, he is not likely (though he could still afford to do so) to release details of the exact behavior of the US planes and ships that led to Libyan firing (which would include releasing the effects of US ECM on his equipment: which the Soviets might not want, either).

--Among the possibilities--which begin with US planes making mock firing runs, locking in on Libyan radars, or perhaps blanking out their radars--would be the US causing fake images on Libyan radars to simulate attacks by US planes. (We have announced that ECM did create fake targets for Libyan missiles. Where were these targets heading--before the first Libyan missile was fired?)

Of course, it may not have been necessary to do any of this. Perhaps, as we have implied, K. chose to fire when confronted by the mere presence of warships and planes within the Gulf. But it would have been possible to do such things; i.e., Reagan could count on provoking a reaction from Khaddafy, even if there had been indications (which might or might not have been the case) that Khaddafy was determined to be very cautious.

Note that the US probably had good indications--by SI--whether Khaddafy was planning to rise to the bait or not, and how much effort would be needed to get a SAM out of him. (Kelso

showed that one SAM was enough to release him to fire at patrol boats, whether they were firing or not).

--General principle: Keep in mind the likelihood that the USG had very good intelligence on the intentions of both the Libyans, the Sandinistas (and possibly even the Soviets), as well as on their real-time reading of events and tactical decisions, via SI.

--On Honduran "invasion": There had been news for some weeks that the contras were on a relative rampage, after months of inactivity. Wasn't there a story last week that a very large movement had occurred from the Honduran base just before the "invasion," which was precisely a hot-pursuit reaction by the Sandinistas?

What false intelligence might have been fed to the Sandinistas--by informer, captured documents, or their own SI--on the intentions of the contras "during this period of Congressional consideration"--to stimulate them into a strong response?

Again, as with Libya, such extra "intelligence tickling" might not have been necessary. Perhaps Ortega was just reckless, uncalculating of the response. Yet they have, on the contrary, shown considerable sensitivity to US domestic politics (with the exception of the Moscow trip--which may have been forced by the SU--and the emergency regulations). (For that matter, so has Khaddafy: note the recent comment of foreign diplomat, "He hasn't taken any actions in the US, which shows he has his feet on the ground").

Again, the point is that the US could have done this if it were necessary (and they would have had good indications even before the operations whether or not such effort would be necessary). So Reagan could both count on the desired response (not with certainty, but with high probability, in both cases), and on its timing.

--Back to outline notes:

--Larger picture: Wicker's pattern of provocation, against Summit.

--Hyp.: the Perle faction is opposed to another Summit; they feared the last one (see newsclips MBG sent, on their fears of an "arms control Summit," New Republic);

--need for ABM and CD: how to get CD: nuclear terrorist incident.
--Gorbachev tactic should be: don't get provoked into cancelling summit; come, be friendly; no agreement on "privacy"; make full use of US TV.

--Perle objective? To cancel ABM treaty; legacy to SDI; provoke SU into abandoning it or violating it.

--Goal: two sides with unstable FS forces (as if SU had aput lots of missiles on Cuba). Only one superpower relies on FU threats to maintain worldwide empire; only one has "a lot to lose, in regions

everywhere, adjacent to the other." Non-nuclear parity wouldn't do the job; we could be outnumbered in many regions, not only by Soviet troops, but also on Soviet borders. Thus, we rely on threats in a way the SU doesn't, we have no alternatives, and our prestige is at stake and threatened; thus, our threats are credible, given instability, in a way that theirs would not be (except in East Europe).